(b) if so, the extent thereof;

(c) whether the Government have any proposal to encourage foreign investment in broadcasting sector;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the time by which the Prasarbharti Bill is likely to be passed ?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) and (b) The Government have introduced the Broadcasting Bill, 1997 in Lok Sabha on 16.5.97, which, inter alia, provides for regulation and licensing of Direct-to-Home television services. The bill is currently under consideration of the Joint Parliamentary Committee. With a view to prevent pre-emption of the broadcasting law by foreign entitles, as may be passed by the Parliament in this regard, Ministry of Telecommunication, Department of Telecom have issued a notification dated 16.7.97 prohibiting establishment. maintenance, operation and possession of equipments capable of receiving signals above the frequency band of 4800 MHz.

(c) and (d) Government have already introduced the Broadcasting Bill in the Parliament which addresses the issue regarding foreign investment in broadcasting sector. The Bill is at present under the consideration of Joint Parliamentary Committee.

(e) The Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990 will come into effect from 15th of September, 1997. A Notification in this regard has been issued on 22.07.1997.

Development on Solar Energy

*36. SHRI VIJAY PATEL : Will the Minister of NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to make the use of solar energy more people-oriented and effective;

(b) if so, the detils thereof; and

(c) the amount of central grants sanctioned for the development of solar energy during 1997-98, state-wise with particular reference to Gujarat ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD): (a) and (b) A number of measures have been taken to promote the wide-spread use of solar energy devices and systems in the country. Among them are :

(i) Providing subsidies to users of solar photovoltaic systems such as solar lanterns, rural domestic lights, village street lights, small rural power plants and water pumps.

(ii) Providing soft loan to users of solar thermal systems such as solar water heaters, dryers and solar stills through the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA). Soft loans are also available to individual users of solar water heating systems through the Canara Bank and the Union Bank to India in several cities.

(iii) Providing interest-free loans to the bulk users and inter-mediaries of solar cookers through IREDA and to individual users through the Canara Bank and the Union Bank of India.

(iv) Establishment of solar shops in major cities in order to make solar products easily available to users.

(v) Provision of 100% depreciation to commercial organisations for income tax purposes, exemption from excise duties, exemption from sales tax in several states and concessional rates of custom duty on imported materials.

(vi) Supporting training programmes, demonstrations and publicity activities.

(c) An amount of Rs. 58.50 crore has been provided in the Budget of the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources for solar energy programmes during 1997-98. A part of this budget is used to provide grants to states towards promotional activities. However, state-wise financial allocations have not been made.

Diversion of Central Funds allocated for Rural Development

*37. SHRI SIBU SOREN :
SHRI RAM NAIK :

Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether a large sum of Central funds allotted for various rural development programmes have been diverted for other purposes in West Bengal;

(b) if so, the details thereof, programme-wise;

(c) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General in its report for the year ended on March 31, 1996 has also indicated the State Government for violating the Central guidelines; and

(d) the action taken or proposed to be taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU): (a) to (d) Reports of the Comptroller & Auditor General for the year ended 31st March, 1996 No. 3 (Civi)l and No. 4 (Civil) in respect of Government of West Bengal have raised a number of points arising from audit of financial transactions, inter-alia of the departments of the Government of West Bengal as well as the results of audit in respect of financial assistance given to local bodies. Some of these points relate to the implementation of Employment Assurance Scheme and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana.

These reports of CAG have been laid before the West Bengal Legislative Assembly on 10.6.1997. The CAG reports are now subject matters of consideration of the West Bengal Public Accounts Committee.

The West Bengal Government have reported that two cases of public interest litigations in respect of this subject matter are pending in the Honourable High Court of West Bengal and the matter is sub-judice.

[English]

Revised Rate of Royalty on Minerals

*38. SHRI KASHIRAM RANA :
SHRI HARIN PATHAK :

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have announced the revised rates of royalty on minerals recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the revised rates of royalty is much less than demanded by the Government of Gujarat on various minerals produced in the State;

(d) if so, whether the Union Government have considered further revision of the rates of royalty; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government Gazette Notification GSR No. 214 (E) dated 11.4.97 revising the rates of royalty on major minerals (other than Coal and Lignite) has been laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha on 8.5.97.

(c) Revision of Royalty rates on major minerals (other than Coal and Lignite) was effected on the basis of recommendations of the Study Group constituted for the purpose, wherein the State Govt. of Gujarat was also represented. The Study Group had detailed consultations with the State Govts., mineral industry and other agencies. Investment promotion, stability of royalty regime, parity with the international rates and revenue gain to the State Govts. have been the basic criteria for the revision of the royalty rates.

(d) and (e) As per provision of section 9(3) of the MM (R&D) Act, 1957, the royalty rates cannot be enhanced more than once during any period of three years.

[Translation]

Selection of Programmes

*39. SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any prescribed norms/system for the selection of programmes to be telecast and broadcast by Doordarshan and All India Radio;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the guidelines issued for the selection of programmes in this regard;

(d) whether some changes are contemplated by the Government to make the existing system transparent and corruption free; and

(3) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government in this regard so far ?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY) : (a) to (c) Yes Sir. Programmes received from outside producers are scrutinised by a Committee to assess the suitability as per programme requirements and in conformity to the Broadcast/Telecast Code. The following broad criteria are adopted for selection